

We are a large Head Start program that covers 12 East Texas counties. We partner with 48 school districts to provide Head Start services to 2000 children. Our students are currently transported on over approximately 500 school buses. These new regs do not cover pre-kindergarten students; therefore we are in a predicament as to getting in compliance with the requirements for child restraints and for bus monitors. We are not funded to provide transportation; our partnership districts provide it. Therefore, this is an unfunded mandate. We are very concerned about child safety. If we are not allowed to use the vest type of restraint, we will probably be put out of business. If we cannot meet the regs, our districts will not provide transportation. Our enrollment will be drastically reduced, and our neediest children will not get the educational experience they desperately need. This vest is our best hope of being able to get into compliance someday. It is going to cost us about \$80,000. We can probably cut the budget in other areas in order to come up with this. On the other hand, the monitors will cost us \$1.5 million. There is no way we can fund this. I do not think that those who authored these regs understand the dynamics of a program like ours. Please consider allowing us to use the vests!